



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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Helping People Help the Land...

SUBJECT: Activities Report, August 4 – October 3, 2006

DATE: October 10, 2006

TO: Rhode Island Conservation Partnership

DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST REPORT

**EASTERN RHODE ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT (ERICD), by Michael Kenyon,
Acting District Conservationist**

Six contracts have completed installation of various practices over the last three months. Work has begun on FY06 contracts. Survey and cultural resource reviews are underway and being prioritized in order to effectively handle the workload.

The NRCS Staff prepared for the fiscal year close-out by informing their clients that the ProTracts system will be down in Rhode Island from September 19, 2006 through October 9, 2006. Clients that were having various practices completed forwarded their needed documentation to the NRCS Staff in order to process their cost-share payment prior to the shutdown. Some clients were not able to submit their documentation in time or complete installation of their practices by the necessary time and therefore will be receiving their cost-share payment in October once the system is back up and running.

Staff continued to act as a catalyst to have their clients install those practices eligible for the Energy Initiative payment of 15%. Some of the clients thought that the extension of the deadline to December was beneficial in order to be able to finish the installation processes, while others were displeased that it seemed like the deadlines continued to be extended and if they knew that the deadline was to be December, they may have handled their situations differently.

Several additional Highly Erodible Land conservation (HELC) and Wetland conservation (WC) Certification determinations were completed for lands that have not previously been evaluated by NRCS.

Progress continued toward the goals for the FY2006 Performance Measures. Some of the results from the ERICD Fiscal Year 2006 Report include that approximately 1906 acres of watershed plans were developed for water or air quality, two Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMP's) were written, and 75 acres of conservation plans were developed for grazing lands.

In addition, contracts continued to be reviewed with the clients and modifications completed in order to address the backlog. Some of the backlogged practices still need documentation and client signatures in order to process payments.

**NORTHERN RHODE ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT (NRICD), by Michael Merrill,
District Conservationist**

Thirteen contracts have completed installation of various practices over the last three months. Work has begun on FY06 contracts. Survey and cultural resource reviews are underway and being prioritized in order to effectively handle the workload.

The NRCS Staff prepared for the fiscal year close-out by informing their clients that the ProTracts system will be down in Rhode Island from September 19, 2006 through October 9, 2006. Clients that were having various practices completed forwarded their needed documentation to the NRCS Staff in order to process their cost-share payment prior to the shutdown. Some clients were not able to submit their documentation in time or complete installation of their practices by the necessary time and therefore will be receiving their cost-share payment in October once the system is back up and running.

Staff continued to act as a catalyst to have their clients install those practices eligible for the Energy Initiative payment of 15%. Some of the clients thought that the extension of the deadline to December was beneficial in order to be able to finish the installation processes. There are five clients that have are potential energy incentive projects and we anticipate four of these may finish by the deadline.

Several additional Highly Erodible Land conservation (HELC) and Wetland conservation (WC) Certification determination were completed for lands that have not previously been evaluated by NRCS.

Progress continued toward the goals for the FY2006 Performance Measures. Some of the results from the NRICD Fiscal Year 2006 Report include that four Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMP's) were written and seven clients with CNMP's have applied practices related to the plan. Approximately, 236 acres of conservation plans were developed for grazing lands and 205 for cropland in the Northern District. Overall, 46 conservation plans were written or updated and 30 plans had one or more conservation practices applied this fiscal year.

In addition, contracts continued to be reviewed with the clients and modifications completed in order to address the backlog. Some of the backlogged practices still need documentation and client signatures in order to process payments.

**SOUTHERN RHODE ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT (SRICD), by Michael Kenyon,
District Conservationist**

Fifteen contracts have completed installation of various practices over the last three months. Work has begun on FY06 contracts. Survey and cultural resource reviews are underway and being prioritized in order to effectively handle the workload.

District Staff have been working on relocation efforts, as well as working with NRCS Staff in developing several proposals with landowners to submit to Rhode Island (RI) Department of Environmental Management (DEM) for water quality improvement projects.

The NRCS Staff prepared for the fiscal year close-out by informing their clients that the ProTracts system will be down in Rhode Island from September 19, 2006 through October 9,

2006. Clients that were having various practices completed forwarded their needed documentation to the NRCS Staff in order to process their cost-share payment prior to the shutdown. Some clients were not able to submit their documentation in time or complete installation of their practices by the necessary time and therefore will be receiving their cost-share payment in October once the system is back up and running.

Work has begun on FY06 contracts. Survey and cultural resource reviews are underway and being prioritized in order to effectively handle the workload.

Several additional Highly Erodible Land conservation (HELC) and Wetland conservation (WC) Certification determination were completed for lands that have not previously been evaluated by NRCS.

Staff continued to act as a catalyst to have their clients install those practices eligible for the Energy Initiative payment of 15%. Some of the clients thought that the extension of the deadline to December was beneficial in order to be able to finish the installation processes, while others were displeased that it seemed like the deadlines continued to be extended and if they knew that the deadline was to be December, they may have handled their situations differently.

Progress continued toward the goals for the FY2006 Performance Measures. Some of the results from the SRICD Fiscal Year 2006 Report include that approximately 80565 acres of watershed plans were developed for water or air quality, two Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMP's) were written, and 119 acres of conservation plans were developed for grazing lands.

In addition, contracts continued to be reviewed with the clients and modifications completed in order to address the backlog. Some of the backlogged practices still need documentation and client signatures in order to process payments

EARTH TEAM VOLUNTEER PROGRAM (ETVP), by Jeanne Comerford, Public Affairs Specialist

August through September 2006, RI NRCS used 1 volunteers for a total of 75 hours to assist with implementing NRCS programs/services

ECOLOGICAL SCIENCES, by J. Eric Scherer, State Resource Conservationist

Economics: The updated Fiscal Year 2007 Rhode Island NRCS Conservation Programs Cost List (Cost List) was completed on September 28, 2006.

This year, National Headquarters (NHQ) is discontinuing the use of the cost share type, AM, which is an average cost not to exceed a maximum specified cost. NHQ is requiring that all conservation practices be listed as a flat rate (FR) for management practices and as an average cost (AC) for all other conservation practices listed in the Cost List.

The primary difference between the AM and AC cost share type is that AM specifies a maximum per unit cost that NRCS will reimburse to compensate the client for installing the practice. If the installation cost is less than the maximum, NRCS compensates the client by reimbursing a percent of the installation cost. The AC cost share type lists the unit cost that NRCS will reimburse to compensate the client for installing the practice: NRCS compensates the client by

reimbursing a percent of the amount listed as the AC regardless of how much it cost the client to install the practice.

In past years, Rhode Island NRCS relied heavily on the cost share designation of AM and used engineer's estimates for several conservation practices that were tailored to specific projects. The discontinuation of the AM cost share practice necessitated staff to develop new practice components for several conservation practices. Updating the Cost List for Fiscal Year 2007 was a joint effort headed by the State Economist with active participation from the State Resource Conservationist, Program Managers, Engineers, District Conservationists, and field staff.

Cultural Resources (CR): The Cultural Resource Coordinator (CRC) continues to work on consistency of reporting/recording CR requirements for contracts.

The CRC is currently coordinating consultation between Rhode Island NRCS and the RI State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)/RIHPHC with regard to two river restoration projects located at the Dyerville Dam and at the Rising Sun Dam along the Woonasquatucket River, Providence.

A Phase 1(c) Cultural Resource Survey was conducted at both sites and determined that both sites are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historical Places. In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, this determination necessitates that Rhode Island NRCS provide mitigation to off-set any loss in cultural resources that may result from the proposed project. Consultation with SHPO/RIHPHC is progressing favorably and details for mitigation are being outlined so that the river restoration projects will be able to proceed.

Conservation Practice Standards: The updated Fiscal Year 2007 Rhode Island NRCS Conservation Practice Standards list was presented to the State Technical Team on September 6th at the scheduled meeting. Several conservation practices have been modified at the national level and are being reviewed at the state level. A number of conservation practices are not currently being used in Rhode Island and have been identified to be removed from the list. The following table is a summary of proposed actions on the FY 2007 Conservation Practice Standards list:

FY 2007 Rhode Island Conservation Practice List

Title	Revision Date	STT Review Date	Notes
Alley Cropping (AC) (311) Practice Standard	04/02/2003	04/02/2003	Remove
Anionic Polyacrylamide Erosion Control (AC) (450) Practice Standard	04/02/2003	04/02/2003	Remove
Deep Tillage (AC) (324) Practice Standards	04/03/2003	04/03/2003	Possible removal after FT 2007 if not used
Feed Management (NO) (592) Practice Standard	10/12/2004	10/12/2004	Possible removal after FT 2007 if not used
Firebreak (FT) (394) Practice Standard	04/03/2003	04/03/2003	Possible removal after FT 2007 if not used
Flood proofing Measure (EA) (714) Practice Standard	11/19/2003	11/19/2003	NEED TO HAVE SCE REVIEW
Grazing Land Mechanical Treatment (AC) (548) Practice Standard	04/03/2003	04/03/2003	DELETE

Title	Revision Date	STT Review Date	Notes
Irrigation Canal or Lateral (FT) (320) Practice Standard	04/03/2003	04/03/2003	DELETE
Irrigation Field Ditch (FT) (388) Practice Standard	04/03/2003	04/03/2003	DELETE
Irrigation System, Tailwater Recovery (447) Practice Standard	04/03/2003	04/03/2003	DELETE
Irrigation Water Conveyance, Pipeline, Aluminum Tubing (430AA) Practice Standard	04/03/2003	04/03/2003	DELETE
Prescribed Forestry (AC) (409) Practice Standard	May 2006	09/06/06	New Practice available
Pumped Well Drain (NO) (532) Practice Standard	04/03/2003	04/03/2003	DELETE
Residue Management, Mulch Till (AC) (329B) Practice Standard	09/24/2003	09/24/2003	Possible removal after FT 2007 if not used
Residue Management, No Till and Strip Till (AC) (329A) Practice Standard	09/24/2003	09/24/2003	Possible removal after FT 2007 if not used
Residue Management, Ridge Till (AC) (329C) Practice Standard	04/03/2003	04/03/2003	Possible removal after FT 2007 if not used

NEPA Environmental Assessment Flow Diagrams: State Economist continues to work with representatives from the other New England States and staff from the ENTSC to complete Environmental Assessment (EA) flow diagrams to meet NEPA requirements. The State Economist has finalized EA diagrams for the 11 conservation practices as committed to by the Rhode Island State office and has completed informational sheets for the same 11 conservation practices to accompany the EA diagrams. A working meeting is scheduled for the New England Project Representatives during October 18-19 to finalize the Environmental Assessment for submission to the Federal Register.

ENGINEERING, by Frank Vogel, Assistant State Engineer

Pocasset Floodplain Management Study (FPMS): The final draft of the flood plain management study went out for review comments on Sept 5, 2006. All review comments are required back to NRCS by September 26 to incorporate into the FPMS. A public meeting is planned to be held in early October for release of the document to the general public. Preliminary design plans and drawings (30%) have been submitted by GZA Geoenvironmental at selected critical areas for floodwalls, flood proofing and storm water modifications.

Engineering Services: Statements of Work and Task Orders have been issued to two engineering firms (EA Associates and Fuss & O'Neill) for design, permitting, and construction oversight services on the following fish passage/dam removal/wetlands projects: Atlantic Mills, Dyerville Dam, Paragon Dam, and Deerfield Park

GRAZING LAND CONSERVATION INITIATIVE (GLCI), by Michael Merrill

The GLCI Agreement with Eastern District was completed for the fiscal year. Discussions have begun on how to implement and provide technical assistance for the scheduled prescribed

grazing plans for our clients that are planned for this season and next. We may be able to enter into another agreement to get this work accomplished.

We designed and ordered 150 pasture / grazing sticks to provide for our clients and partners. This is a simple tool to help pasture managers provide enough forage for their livestock while keeping the pasture condition and environmental resources healthy. We will be distributing them at pasture walks and to individual clients through the conservation planners and other partners.

OPERATIONS, by Jackie Pashnik

Personnel Actions:

- ♦ Vicky Drew, Resource Conservationist, was selected as the Assistant State Conservationist for Programs for Vermont NRCS, effective 10/16/2006.
- ♦ Michael Coombs, Idaho NRCS, was selected to serve on three-month detail to Rhode Island to fill in behind Vicky Drew until that vacancy is filled.
- ♦ Intermittent appointments of Suzanne Enser, Michelle Marasco, and Meaghan Shaffer were extended through 12/31/2006.
- ♦ Intermittent appointment of Ben Tavares, Engineering Technician, expired on 9/30/2006

Performance Goals:

Performance Summary - 2006 Final	Goal	Total Progress	Progress Percent
CNMP Applied (No.)	10	10	100
CNMP Written (No.)	9	9	100
Conservation Plans for Cropland Written (Ac.)	1,000	1,036	104
Conservation Plans for Grazing Land Written (Ac.)	400	470	118
Farmland & Grazing Land Protected by Conservation Easements (Ac.)	158	95	60
Grazing land with Conservation Applied (Ac.)	185	480	260
Irrigation Efficiency Improved (Ac-Ft)	15	34	229
Local Businesses Created in Rural Communities through RC&D Assistance (No.)	4	16	400
Local Jobs Created in Rural Communities through RC&D Assistance (No.)	8	15	188
Non-fed. Land Managed for the Protection & Enhancement of Habitat for Species with Declining Populations (Ac.)	7,430	11,939	160
Non-fed. Land Treated for Fish & Wildlife Habitat (Ac.)	535	3,710	690
Prime, Unique, and Important Farmland Protected by Conservation Easements from Conversion to Non-Agricultural Uses (Ac.)	89	20	22

Performance Summary - 2006 Final	Goal	Total Progress	Progress Percent
Reduction in Cropland Soils Damaged by Erosion (Ac.)	100	85	85
Soil Erosion Reduced (Tons)	310	1,012	327
Soil Surveys Mapped or Updated (Ac.)	1,000	1,000	100
Watershed or Area-Wide Conservation Plans Developed for Water or Air Quality (Ac.)	79,000	172,597	218
Watershed or Area-Wide Conservation Plans Developed for Water or Air Quality (No.)	9	12	133
Watershed or Area-Wide Resource Plans, Studies or Inventories for Flood Prevention or Mitigation (No.)	3	3	100
Watershed or Area-Wide Resource Plans, Studies or Inventories - Water Conservation & Water Supply (No.)	1	0	0
Wetlands Created, Restored or Enhanced (Ac.)	130	199	153
Wetlands Protected by 30-year or Perm. Easements (Ac.)	29	30	105

The factors that contributed to the **shortfall** of these performance goals

- **Reduction in the Acreage of Cropland Soils Damaged by Erosion (Ac.) - shortfall of 20 acres.**
 - Not all practices in Conservation System Guide were applied as anticipated so while erosion was reduced, business definition was not met for areas under EQIP contracts.
- **Watershed or Area-Wide Resource Plans, Studies, or Inventories for Water Conservation and Water Supply (No.) - shortfall of one plan.**
 - Multi-year, partnership project is in final draft and is expected to be final in FY2007. The USGS, due to staffing issues, was not able to complete the plan as scheduled.
- **Farmland and Grazing Land Protected by Conservation Easements (Ac.) - shortfall of 64 acres and Prime, Unique, and Important Farmland Protected by Conservation Easements from Conversion to Non-Agricultural Uses (Ac.) - shortfall of 69 acres.**
 - Parcels anticipated to close this fiscal year have been delayed due to the appraisal process and funding issues with partners.

Training, Conferences, and Meetings Attended

- ♦ NRCS Boot Camp Weeks 4-6 (of 6), Giorgi
- ♦ Ethno-Botany, Field Staff
- ♦ Activity Based Cost (ABC) Train the Trainer, Pashnik
- ♦ Managing for Excellence, Merrill
- ♦ RC&D Concepts Training, Modisette
- ♦ American Indian - Alaskan Native Employees Association Meeting, Comerford and Rides at the Door
- ♦ Dashboard Training, Shaw

OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS, by Jeanne Comerford)

Outreach Events

People Reached

August 4, RI Land Trusts E-News, FRPP article published, Drew	500
August 17, Ethno botany training, Lipsky	25
August 28, Walker farm media event, WHIP project	25
September 21, Big E Fair, Team USDA booth promoting agriculture in New England.	1,000

SOILS PROGRAM, by Jim Turenne

The RI Soil staff began field work mapping the subaqueous soils in Quonochontaug Pond in conjunction with the MapCoast Partnership. Assistance was also provided to the CT. NRCS to obtain soil cores in Little Narragansett Bay and the New Hampshire NRCS collecting soil cores in Little Bay for an Eelgrass restoration project.

Our Envirothon intern, Michelle Marasco from Narragansett High School began work with the soil program. During her short stay Michelle worked on converting the analog published soil survey of Rhode Island into an electronic document so it can be provided online and sent to customers on a CD. Michelle also scanned the historic 1904 and 1944 soil surveys for RI so they can be posted on the web for reference.

The soil staff also provided on-site soil investigations to assist with farm plans on seven farms throughout the state. Assistance included hydric soil delineation/determinations, determining soil type for engineering plans and updating soil mapping for the FRPP program.

RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT, by Chris Modisette

Rhody Warm Project featured in The Providence Business News

The ***Providence Business News*** ran an article on the Rhody Warm project in their July 31, 2006 edition. The idea was picked up by the newspaper as a result of a press release generated from Senator Chafee's office announcing the award of USDS Rural Development RBEG grants to the RC&D Council.

Rhode Island Foundation Grant has been selected for consideration in the next steps of their Strategy Grant application process. The RC&D Council application, *Watershed Protection through Forest Stewardship: A Short Course for Forest Landowners and Managers*, was one (1) of 156 grants out of an initial pool of 280 that was selected for further consideration.

RI Soil Erosion & Sediment Control Manual

An electronic version of the current ***Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Manual*** has been produced through a cooperative effort with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT). RIDOT has placed the handbook on their website. A copy of the electronic handbook has been forwarded to USDA-NRCS, will be posted on the RC&D website, and is available to any and all who would like it in an electronic version.

Rhode Island RC&D Area Council to host the **2007 New England RC&D Fall Conference**.

Ethno-Botany Project & Workshop

RC&D assisted with the coordination of an ethno-botany workshop and project by the Southern Rhode Island Conservation District (SRICD) and USDA-NRCS. Two (2) The workshops were held on Wednesday, August 16 and Monday, August 21, 2006 at the USDA NRCS office. Approximately 45 people attended the two (2) workshops. In addition, we assisted with a woodland walk on Friday, August 18th at the Nuweetooun School. Approximately 18 people attended the walk.

Rural Fire Protection

The RC&D Council worked with Cathy Sparks to prepare draft Cooperative Agreement with the Department of Environmental Management, Division of Forest Environment and the Rhode Island Resource Conservation and Development Area Council, Inc., the Grantee, for the purpose of conducting the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program (VFA) in the State of Rhode Island.

Under this agreement RC&D will conduct an assessment of need for dry hydrants and cisterns in the wildland urban interface and rural lands of the state of Rhode Island. They will also provide for the administration of grants to eligible rural volunteer fire departments to be funded at a cost-share rate of 50/50 for the installation of dry hydrants and cisterns in rural areas defined as high risk for wildland fire as approved by and in cooperation with the RIDEM Division of Forest Environment (DFE). The RC&D will also provide technical assistance to fire departments as well as project oversight, verification of local match obligations, and final inspections.

Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP)

RI RC&D assists the RIDEM – Division of Forest Environment (RIDFE) with the implementation of the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) by administering cost-share payments to eligible forest landowners for completed FLEP practices as approved by RIDFE.

The purpose of the FLEP is to provide a coordinated and cooperative Federal, State, and local sustainable forestry program for the establishment, maintenance, enhancement, and restoration of forests on non-industrial private forest land.

In July two (2) landowners owning a total of 141 acres of forestland received \$1,266 of cost-share assistance for the preparation of forest stewardship plans. To date in FY 2006 the program has enrolled 1,564.5 acres of forestland involving 18 forest landowners who received \$11,784.00 of cost-share assistance.

Rhode Island Stream Continuity Project (Develop sub-watershed Plan(s) to assist Trout Unlimited and the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association to assess and improve stream continuity in the 33,750 acre Upper Wood River Watershed).

The following work has been completed by intern Meaghan Shaffer:

- Completed survey of 171 stream crossings
- Entered all data into the UMASS Stream Crossing database
- Began prioritizing the culverts within the Upper Wood River watershed in terms of being replaced or maintained
- Working to complete a rapid watershed assessment for the project

- Planning a meeting with potential partners to present preliminary findings on October 10, 2006

“Rhody Warm” - Wool Project

- Wool was shipped to Faribault Mills in Minnesota for cleaning/scouring;
- 950 pounds of clean wool was returned to S&D Spinning in Massachusetts in mid-August to begin the blanket manufacturing process;
- The project steering committee met on August 22 to agree upon a proposed blanket design
- Wool was spun into yarn on October 6, 2006
- To date we have orders for 104 blankets
- We expect blankets to be delivered by the end of October

RI Coverts Project

The Council received up to a three (3) year grant through the NRCS CIG (Conservation Innovation Grant) Program to fund the start-up of this project in RI. Grant funding totals \$25,000 per year.

The Coverts Project has been reaching out to individual woodland owners and teaching them how sound management practices can make wildlife healthier, more diverse, and more abundant.

Currently this program does not exist in Rhode Island. The RI Resource Conservation & Development Area (RIRC&D) is working with the RI Division of Fish & Wildlife and Forest Environment, RIFCO, Tree Farm, Ruffed Grouse Society and URI to establish the Coverts project in Rhode Island. RI RC&D will capitalize on the availability of expertise from UCONN Cooperative Extension as well as the interest by our partners to establish this as a viable wildlife habitat improvement opportunity for Rhode Island’s woodland owners

Forest Legacy Program

RI RC&D is represented on the Rhode Island Forest Stewardship Committee (Committee) which, in part, implements the **Forest Legacy Program** in Rhode Island. The Forest Legacy Program provides grants to the State of Rhode Island through the USDA Forest Service, to acquire land or interests in land from willing sellers. The fair market value of interests acquired is determined by standardized federal appraisal methods. Acquisitions are based on the concept of "willing seller, willing buyer". There is no condemnation of land involved.

The Committee met on August 29, 2006 to consider 2008 funding recommendations.

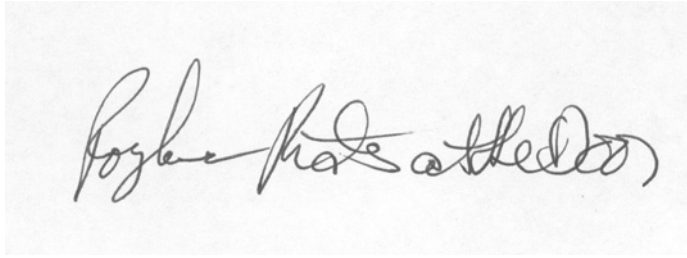
Technical Assistance to NRCS

- **State Leadership Team** member
- **Appraisal Reviews**
- Development of **EQIP Forestry Policy for 2007**

Training

RC&D Concepts Training, August 11-17, 2006, St. Louis, MO

This is the activities report for NRCS Rhode Island. If you have any questions or need further information, please let me know.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Roylene Rides at the Door". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored, textured background.

ROYLENE RIDES AT THE DOOR
State Conservationist